

ECIA Conservation Committee Minutes

June 2, 2020, via Zoom

Attending: Chair, Paul Butt, Vice Chair, Tom Brimacombe, Members, Carol Beidleman, Thomas Bredenberg, John Parker, John Reynolds, Board Liaison Carol Sanguinetti, HOAMCO, Mike Rogers, Sarah Skagen, excused absence, Mary Cark

Guests Attending: Phillipe Cohen, Jan Cohen, Andra Nyman, Eddie Dry, John Gogas, Darrel Owen, Phillip Young, Axel-Mike Schneider, Jim Knight, Elizabeth Maclaren.

Attending but not further Identified: Dennis, JRBP

1. 1. Appointment of Recording Secretary, Thomas Bredenberg
2. 2. Approval of Agenda, Motion, John Parker, Tom Brimacombe 2nd
3. 3. Approval of May Minutes, Motion, John Parker, John Reynolds 2nd
4. 4. Board Liaison Report, Carol Sanguinetti: Courts open under current social distancing restrictions per eblast. Pool ready to open pending inspection, Jessica Collins is working on it. Watch eblast for updated information on waivers and hours.
5. 5. HOAMCO report: Mike Rogers: Updates on requests to REI and Alltrails to remove information regarding the Preserve. Liv, receptionist at REI, posted "closed to climbing" on web page and the video is down, but all other information remains. Mike will send Paul synopsis, CC will write letter requesting total take down, Thom Bredenberg will submit a draft. Alltrails: Due to a lack of response to our request to remove Preserve Trails from Alltrails web site, this matter will be referred to Board attorney with the above synopsis.
6. 6. Project status updates:

Ad hoc parking opposite TH 4. Paul proposed flagging next week prior to setting posts. Mike will coordinate a date for Kubota work. John Reynolds will assist. Discussion on degree of development. Not a long-term improvement; the intent is to address the immediate problem of cars parked along CR 51. Area is flat with few rocks so grading is not required. Social trail leading off of pullout .1 mile downhill from TH4, will check if ours then post No Trespassing sign.

401 Gully, revised Phase 1, Paul Butt is working with Jan Willem to get information for the RFP, will include finance chair.

Fence line horse patrol by Amelia 05-24-2020, This is the last planned patrol. No new cuts were identified. Repair needed on western most fence bordering Joe Miller's property. Paul Butt identified two areas (end of Cougar Canyon and at the corner post) in addition to those already identified.

Volunteer information signs (John Reynolds)

Library Trail, June Vistas article submitted

Replace gate/fencing on ranch road east of TH4 (Deferred)

Remaining work on 404 Meadow project (Deferred)

Other projects for 2020 - Dynamic Duo project recommendations? Send brief proposals to committee for decision to proceed. John Parker and Tom Brimacombe will keep a to do list of projects. Carol Beidleman asked if Board permission for minor trail work is required during restrictions. Carol Sanguinetti said no need to get Board permission as long as we follow CDC guidelines.

7. 7. New business:

Draft 2021 budget (Paul Butt), feedback from CC due tomorrow, needs to submit first draft this week.

8. 8. Old Business:

Signage and Map Updates (Tom Brimacombe) Dropbox folder with all maps, trailhead and junction signs. Chair will summarize job and review budget for the entire project and ask Board for budget adjustment. John Parker and Carol Beidelman will work on modernizing language for the brochure, including responsible use. Tom Brimacombe says incorporating new text is technically feasible. New photos are invited.

Early Summer work day scheduling ON HOLD

Rock Climber Damage:

- Status report on the middle section of the 401 archaeologically sensitive area (Paul Butt & Thom Bredenberg). Please reference Chair's report of 05-222020 attached hereto.
- Discussion of closure of the social trail off of 401 with a sign & brushing Consensus put up the closure sign. Discuss brushing next meeting. Suggestions for greater signage. For budgetary reasons inexpensive laminated signs will be used to post no rock-climbing policy at all trailheads.

9. 9. Open Forum: Discussion of rock climbing in the Preserve

Mike Schneider questioned whether a brochure map is needed if trail signage is adequate. Carol S., brochure is useful for new resident orientation. MS questioned reasoning of 15year age requirement. MS offered expertise of expert rock climber and referred CC to Access Fund.org,

Jim Knight supports preservation, fewer trails and is opposed to any rock climbing in the Preserve. He brought up the matter of liability for rock climbing injuries if ECIA allows the practice. He supports a fencing agreement with neighbor (Joe Miller). Mike Rogers substantiated that New Mexico is a "fence out" state.

Eddy Dry, unclear signage at 105 1 G and 3G. This will be corrected with the scheduled updated junction signs.

Phillip Cohen, sought information on invasive vegetation. Carol Beidleman will follow up.

Jan Cohen, expressed concerns over recent animal poisoning involving rodenticide. Discussion of whether this matter is within the scope of the CC's charter. Environmental stewardship committee has been disbanded. Referred to next board meeting and future eblasts.

10. 10. Adjournment: Motion, Thom Bredenberg, John Parker 2nd

Report on social trails leading to and middle section of "Cactus Heaven" area northwest of trail 401

Date: 5/22/2020

Conservation Committee members making observations: Thom Bredenberg & Paul Butt

Objective: To document use of this area. We did not attempt to hike into the upper section of this area, along the ridgeline defining the top of the low sandstone cliffs that are being used for rock climbing, nor did we attempt to hike into the lower section, which has been made accessible from the middle site by a ladder.

Route: We followed a well-established social trail, marked in places with cairns, leading from trail 401, a short distance to the northwest.

Observations:

1) Social trails: In addition to the direct route to the section where we made our observations, there are numerous side trails leading to other areas along the base of the cliffs that are being used for rock

climbing. Some of these are marked by cairns. Bicycle tracks leading north-northwest were evident on one of these side trails. There are also a number of short "blind lead" trails branching off of the main trail. The main trail is on hard ground and generally follows contour. Many of the side trails are on soft ground and go cross-contour.

2.) Site characteristics: The principal area being used for climbing in the middle section of "Cactus Heaven" has several features valuable from habitat and ecological points of view. Pockets in the cliff face serve as denning areas. There are several natural catchments in the rock, which are a source of drinking water after it rains or snows. There are places in the cliff face

where water seepage through the rocks has excavated "ledgy" pockets which now support "hanging gardens" consisting largely of desert ferns. The mineralarts.com website explains that the ferns'

"brittle stems and shallow roots make them especially vulnerable to trampling and erosion. Most have very specific requirements for substrate, moisture, and light that limit their distribution. Several are uncommon and/or restricted to certain microclimates within a small geographic range. Even within favorable habitats, areas that are protected from disturbance are small, rare, and often threatened."

The area where we made observations contains petroglyphs. Climbers are climbing over and between these petroglyphs. Other Eldorado residents belonging to New Mexico SiteWatch, Santa Fe-Galisteo Chapter (New Mexico's Archaeological and Heritage site stewardship program) conducted a survey independently of the Conservation Committee on May 20. Numerous archaeologically sensitive sites in the Eldorado Community Preserve were identified during this survey, including the petroglyphs referenced above.

3) Site issues:

A.) Several members of the plant and animal life in this area are critically dependent on the cliff habitat and easily disturbed by human activity. This is particularly the case in the pocket microenvironments along the cliff face.

B.) Although the NM Sitewatch observers concluded that, "Under the legal definitions of an 'archaeological resource' and protective statutes there is no damage to archaeological resources currently present," the proximity of climber's handholds to the petroglyphs is problematic and the situation will not improve with continued use.

C.) The material being used by climbers on the rocks is not ordinary chalk. It appears to be purpose-made for climbing and does not brush off of the rock surface. The difficulties in chalk removal are well known, even where on-site cultural and natural resources are not critically sensitive issues.

D.) Problems created by social trails are numerous. Regulations requiring visitors to "stay on designated trails" are nearly ubiquitous in state and national parks. The USGS provides a guide for managing informal (social) trails and states in part,

"Such routes are rarely sustainable under heavy traffic and subsequent resource degradation is often severe. Creation of multiple routes to common destinations is another frequent problem, resulting in "avoidable" impacts such as unnecessary vegetation/soil loss and fragmentation of flora/fauna habitats."

E.) On a separate site visit by Thom Bredenberg on 5/27, he observed that a shovel was located next to the ladder. If the purpose of this shovel is to bury human waste, the behavior is both unsanitary and unethical. Emergencies happen, but planning for an extended stay in the Preserve with a shovel instead of a "wag bag" not only violates the principles of "leave no trace," but has the potential for contaminating Eldorado's drinking water. The Preserve, specifically in the 400 trails area, is part of the Galisteo watershed. The community's wells draw from this watershed.

4) Next Steps:

A.) Make an observation of the upper and lower areas of "Cactus Heaven."

B.) Make an observation of other rock-climbing sites in use in the Preserve. Some of these sites have been identified by a former member of Santa Fe Search & Rescue.

C.) Continue gathering information about effective approaches to managing rock climbing in scenic areas of the region, e.g., Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs, in an effort to develop a viable management approach for the Community Preserve.

D.) Continue gathering information about management and protection strategies for archaeological and heritage resources on private property in New Mexico.

E.) Based on the above investigations, develop an action plan for site cleanup and if feasible, site restoration. Site restoration will include posting of signs announcing closure to climbing in the Preserve and may include closure of the unauthorized access trail to "Cactus Heaven" from trail 401.

F.) If possible, develop recommendations for a resource management plan that allows some forms of rock climbing in areas of the Preserve where the activity does not jeopardize natural, scenic and other resources.

Paul Butt,

ECIA Conservation Committee.